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TAGS: [NATO](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [MGOV](#) [MARR](#) [FR](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER FRENCH CONTRIBUTIONS IN
AFGHANISTAN

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- [B](#). IIR 6 832 0569 09
- [C](#). STATE 125172
- [D](#). 08 STATE 131480
- [E](#). 08 PARIS 64
- [F](#). 07 PARIS 4615

Classified By: Charge Mark A. Pekala for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) As Washington prepares for possible requests to allies on Afghanistan, this cable lays out French military and civilian capabilities and identifies potential areas for additional French efforts. French officials expect Afghanistan to be a major focus of the 60th anniversary NATO summit to be held in Strasbourg and Baden-Baden in early April and are anxious for the summit to be a successful showcase of alliance unity. Coincidentally, a planned French restructuring of its defense posture in Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Gabon, as well as the end of the EUFOR mission in Chad and expected adjustment of KFOR in Kosovo provide a possible window to reduce forces in these regions and to increase French resources in Afghanistan. To this end, French military planners have already quietly begun identifying a possible 1000-2000 additional troops who could supplement their current deployments in RC-East. But the final decision on increasing troops will ultimately be a political one, taken by the French President himself. The French Defense Minister has been publicly denying an increased role in Afghanistan in advance of a January 28 parliamentary vote on foreign deployments, but this has been negated by other French officials who view the Minister's statements as a political move to keep the Afghanistan conflict from affecting the vote. French political leaders have continually stressed that there is no "purely military" solution to Afghanistan and said they want to see more resources directed to the "Afghanization" of our effort and the gradual turn over of responsibility to the relevant Afghan authorities. Despite hosting a high-profile pledging conference last June, French financial contributions remain modest (USD 165 million over the next three years). In December, the Afghan Interior Minister approached the French about a joint police training mission that would make use of the structure and expertise of the French gendarmerie. The French are actively studying this proposal. This is an area where we could push for increased French involvement in the civilian sector, although the GOF also has relevant expertise in other aspects of development. End summary.

DEFENSE RESTRUCTURING TO OUR BENEFIT

12. (S/NF) Several convergent factors currently present opportunities for the French to find additional military capacity for Afghanistan. According to Jacques Audibert, Director of Strategic Affairs at the MFA, the GOF is assessing how to make more troops available for service in Afghanistan and said that expected French drawdowns in overseas deployments could provide possible additional capacity. This has been confirmed by sources in the French Joint Staff (ref B) and by Philippe Errera, Strategic Affairs advisor to FM Kouchner. Specifically, the GOF is planning a drawdown of military forces stationed in Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Gabon as part of a restructuring effort prompted by the 2008 White Paper on Defense and Security. Audibert confirmed that France is also eyeing the EUFOR mission in Chad, which is expected to end its mission in March, again potentially freeing up additional personnel for other deployments. Finally, Audibert expects the KFOR mission in Kosovo to diminish by half as it adjusts to a "posture of dissuasion." In Kosovo alone there are currently 1730 soldiers, so according to Audibert the change could free up some 800 French soldiers for reassignment. In the coming months a few additional troops are also expected to be released from service in Bosnia as well.

13. (S/NF) Within existing deployments to Afghanistan, French military planners are planning for a possible turnover of RC-Capital to Turkish forces and France could then redeploy its forces (some 1800 troops) to RC-East. In this scenario, the French would stand up a brigade headquarters within CJTF-82. Such a move would take advantage of the existing logistics and force protection that they have already

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established for the deployment last year of a maneuver battalion to Kapisa province. The national support base would remain Camp Warehouse. In one possibility, French planners have also envisioned carving off part of RC-Capital for inclusion into RC-East (the Suwrobi district) and the additional maneuver battalion would task force into that area. If additional battalions are deployed, they would like to go to Laghman province which borders Kapisa, again giving the French military the continuity it seeks.

14. (S/NF) The deployment of Special Forces troops remains on the table, but is considered particularly sensitive for the French government due to those forces' more controversial operations and the French view of them as a strategic national asset needed to protect French interests. According to our sources within the French military, the SOF is ready and willing to deploy but is awaiting the political decision to allow it to go forward.

POSITIVE POLITICAL WILL

15. (C/NF) While military planning seems to be proceeding, senior French officials have been sending contradictory signals on the possibility of French reinforcements in Afghanistan. Defense Minister Herve Morin has recently repeated several times that France does not envision supplementary deployments to Afghanistan "at this time." However, these public remarks have been widely viewed as politically driven due to an upcoming January 28 parliamentary vote on foreign deployments. While the Afghanistan deployment alone was already debated and approved last September by a vote of 343 to 210, the vote on the 28th will encompass all foreign deployments including defense restructuring plans. Thus, it risks raising controversy about drawing down troops from regions of historic national interest (i.e., in Africa) to be sent to fight in Afghanistan for what is still regarded by many as "an American war." Post has interpreted Morin's remarks downplaying the possibility of increased deployments "at this time" as merely an effort to keep the issue of Afghanistan from overtaking the foreign deployment debate while still leaving open the

possibility for the French President to announce reinforcements at a later date. In a January 22 meeting, Audibert confirmed this view, scoffing that Morin was merely "doing his job" in the run up to the parliamentary debate. In the same meeting, Audibert also stated very firmly that "I have no doubt that President Sarkozy will be fully engaged in Afghanistan" in the coming months. Strategic Affairs Advisor to FM Kouchner, Philippe Errera, concurred on January 26, stating that most of the changes in overseas deployments for 2009 are reductions in forces, based on right-sizing to current needs. However, an announced increase in Afghanistan deployments at this time risks creating the political perception that the reductions are taking place solely to increase deployments in Afghanistan, a linkage they want to avoid.

PUSHING FOR INCREASED CIVILIAN ENGAGEMENT

16. (C/NF) French officials at all levels frequently reiterate the mantra that the solution in Afghanistan "cannot be purely military" and will require significant investment in governance, anti-corruption, development, regional cooperation and increased devolution of responsibility to Afghan officials. This comprehensive approach spurred the French willingness to host the June 2008 conference on Afghanistan and the December 2008 meeting of Afghanistan's neighbors, both hosted by FM Kouchner. However, setting aside French willingness to serve as a venue for high-level meetings, French financial commitments remain relatively modest. At the June conference, Paris pledged USD 165 million in reconstruction assistance over the next three years, which places it near the middle of the donor community, on par with the Aga Khan foundation. Additional requests, such as for USD 100 million in additional funding for the Afghan National Army (ref C), remain officially under consideration, but have never been answered. The GOF also has not yet responded to requests for increased security assistance for the 2009 Afghan elections (ref D). French

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officials, most recently Political Director Gerard Araud, have noted that we are "more likely to obtain troops than money" in light of the current financial crisis. That said, France remains one of the leading world economies that can, and should, do more to promote civilian reconstruction and assistance. It also has a wealth of development experience from its historic involvement in Africa, including a long history of taking on in their military deployments reconstruction elements that could be relevant to Afghanistan. One issue to overcome in this domain is finding an appropriate vehicle for deployment of civilian experts (Embassy note: The French categorically reject standing up a PRT, on legal and ideological grounds that prohibit military leadership over civilians. See refs E and F).

17. (C/NF) Afghan Ambassador to France Abdullah Omar recently confirmed that during a December visit to Paris, Afghan Interior Minister Atmar pushed for French assistance in restructuring and training Afghan police forces, along the lines of the French gendarmerie (which is a separate civilian security force that is structured along military lines). Philippe Errera informed post that a team of gendarmerie had recently traveled to Afghanistan to explore ways to follow up on police training. Their study, exploring if, and how, French gendarmes could be involved in Afghanistan police training, is due to be completed by January 26. It will then be passed to both the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior (who recently absorbed the French gendarmerie under her authority) for approval. According to Errera, the study should consider the appropriate vehicle for any deployment, as well as where there could be increased value added. For example, the French are looking at whether to increase their presence in the EUPOL mission (currently France contributes eight officers to the mission), to sign a bilateral agreement

with Afghanistan, or to push for an increased NATO role in support of Afghan police. Errera said that the French lack a funding and contractor system like that of the U.S., so he doubted that France would become more involved in the basic training that the USG does. Instead, France could consider how to provide supplemental training, such as for officers.

¶18. (C/NF) Errera made the point that the GOF considers current funding for Afghanistan to be adequate, as most countries have fulfilled their donor pledges from the June conference. However, the GOF is concerned that significant parts of that funding are not reaching their intended recipients. For example, he cited the case of a well-known hospital called the Institut Meres-Enfants which is largely supported by the Aga Khan Foundation. France increased its contribution to the hospital last year, but was upset to learn that the amount dispatched to the Afghan government was considerably reduced by the time it arrived at the hospital. French officials have raised this directly with President Karzai, who reportedly has "promised to look into it." Such experiences have done little to encourage France to increase its financial contributions.

¶19. (C/NF) Comment. The French government is clearly preparing for some significant requests from the new Obama administration and appears ready to view such requests positively. Expected defense restructuring in the coming months will free up some additional military capacity that could be deployed to Afghanistan. Given the upcoming NATO summit in Strasbourg and Baden-Baden, there is also political will for an Afghanistan success story, although ultimately it will be President Sarkozy himself who makes the final decision on any troop increases. France has a long history of development work in Africa that we believe could be brought to bear in Afghanistan as well. While the French continue to shun the possibility of standing up a PRT, we should be able to push for increased training and development expertise to shore up French promises to find a "comprehensive" -- rather than purely military -- solution to Afghanistan. End comment.
PEKALA